



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

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ALIEN SMUGGLER CONVICTED OF HOSTAGE TAKING

HOUSTON, TX – The fifth and last person charged with hostage taking as a result of an investigation, which begun on July 30, 2005, was convicted. The investigation was initiated after a female hostage, who escaped from a residence located on the 2100 block of William Tell in Houston, Texas, alerted law enforcement authorities. United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle noted that the defendants were convicted of holding undocumented aliens prisoner, while demanding family members pay for their release. The criminal cases are the result of continuing efforts by the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and the Houston office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to crack down on alien smugglers.

At a hearing held this morning, Cupertino Delgado-Miranda, also known as "Cooper," 33, of Mexico, pleaded guilty to hostage taking before United States District Judge Melinda Harmon. Delgado-Miranda admitted to smuggling a group of undocumented aliens into the United States, and holding them hostage at the William Tell residence to compel the payment of smuggling fees on July 30, 2005. Agents of the Houston office of ICE and the HCSO began looking for "Cooper" after a female foreign national escaped from the William Tell residence and identified Cooper as one of the persons holding her and others prisoner at the location until family members paid for their release.

"Cooper" was arrested on August 24, 2005, after the HCSO received a call about a possible hostage situation involving alien smugglers at a residence located on the 6400 block of Overlook. At the residence, deputies discovered a total of nine undocumented aliens, including three juveniles. ICE agents were contacted. During the course of ICE's investigation, agents recognized the name of one of the aliens in custody as a suspect from the investigation of the smuggling operation that began on July 30, 2005, at the 2100 block of William Tell. Delgado-Miranda was taken into administrative custody by ICE agents, and transferred to the custody of the United States Marshal's Service after the filing of a criminal complaint on September 1, 2006.

Cupertino Delgado-Miranda faces a penalty of any number of years up to life imprisonment, and a \$250,000 fine for the hostage taking conviction. His sentencing is scheduled for June 23, 2006. The four other defendants charged as a result of this investigation have also been convicted of hostage taking following their admission of guilt and are pending sentencing. Those four defendants are: Vicente Parades Ariza, 28, of Mexico; Carlos Gomes Sanchez, 27, of Honduras; Santos Netro Azua, 37, of Mexico; and Fernando Olivares Reyes, of Mexico.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jim McAlister and Department of Justice Trial Attorney Lou DeBaca.

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